

9/10/13

RE: Support for HB 4792 and HB 4799

Dear Criminal Justice Committee Members:

The Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition is excited to voice our support for HB 4792 and HB 4799. Our mission is to create safer bicycling conditions for all cyclists. This legislation aimed at protecting non-motorized roadway users and educating motorists about safely sharing Michigan roads will be a helpful tool in creating a more bicycle friendly Greater Grand Rapids.

The City of Grand Rapids and its neighboring municipalities are seeing increased interest in using bicycles for transportation. The economic, health, and quality of life gained from a diverse transportation system that accommodates bicycling and walking are vital to continuing the growth of our regional and state economies. In a rapid transformation, the City of Grand Rapids has gone from 0.7 miles of bicycle lanes in 2011 to well over 30 miles of on-street facilities by the end of 2013. City commissioners and administrators recognize the value of these low-cost investments and have committed to expand that network to over 100 miles.

In addition to infrastructure improvements, improved educational efforts are underway to increase awareness among Michigan drivers and bicyclists. In 2013, Grand Rapids received a \$432,000 federal grant from MDOT to fund a three year educational program focused on drivers and bicyclists that MDOT hopes to replicate around the state. To be viable, however, "Share the Road" and educational campaigns must have a legal backbone, the foundation of which are enhanced protections for non-motorized users.

In Michigan, similar enhanced penalties already exist for reckless drivers who injure or kill construction workers, children in designated school zones, or operators of slow-moving farm vehicles. Vulnerable roadway user provisions are increasing in popularity across the country with multiple states enacting laws in recent years, and legislation pending in many others.

Coupled with our infrastructure improvements, and ongoing efforts to improve driver's education in our state, this legislation provides law enforcement and prosecutors with an enhanced set of tools that fill the gap between basic traffic infractions and more serious crimes.

Despite existing efforts, a disproportionately high number of Michigan bicyclists and pedestrians are involved in crashes that result in deaths or serious injuries.

We are very encouraged to see broad bipartisan support for these common sense bills, as demonstrated by the 20 individual Representatives from both sides of the aisle who signed on as cosponsors of HB 4792 and HB 4799. This includes numerous members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

We are also pleased to note that the draft Michigan Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan 2013-2016 recommends the adoption of vulnerable roadway user legislation as a means to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

On behalf of the Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition board of directors, we strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 4792 and HB 4799.

Sincerely,

Joshua Duggan

Board Chairperson, Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition